

Conversation Starters about **Military Spending**

Introduction

The conversation starters below are based on the War Resisters League Tax Day Flier. These questions have been designed for use in a wide variety of settings, from classrooms to activist spaces, or on the street as you hand out the Tax Day flyer. In turn, these conversation points are meant for a variety of ages and knowledge levels. Use the questions that make sense for your goals, and room has also been left for you to create your own questions. Finally, there is a brief discussion guide below that can be used to help guide you when using the questions in larger groups, or as a way generate activities to go with the questions.

Conversation Starters

1. How would you redistribute the funds spent on the Department of Defense (DoD)? Why do you think that would be a better allocation of funding—and of your tax dollars?

Follow up: Your state and city have likely spent millions upon millions of dollars on war over the past 10 years. How do you think that money could have been spent directly in your community to improve things like housing, the environment, job opportunities, and so forth?

2. After looking at the Tax Day Flyer, how does it make you feel, and what do you want to do about it?

Follow up: Does the federal spending represented on the Tax Day Flyer reflect your values?

Follow up: What would you change about the nation's spending?

3. When challenged, many people who defend the US's rate of military spending often fall back on the excuse that, "The military is too big to fail, what do you think would happen if the US's global presence disappeared? Wouldn't chaos ensue, and what about all of the people who would lose their jobs?"

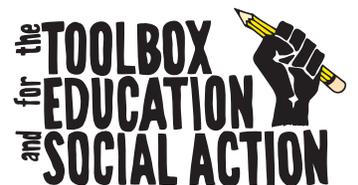
What are the main faults, or holes in this person's statement?

What are 3-5 points or facts will you use to counter these statements?

What historical examples can you cite?

Develop the points above into a statement that you can use and replicate.

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4. A massive DoD budget didn't appear overnight, and in turn, it will take a lot of work to reverse the trend and redirect the funds.

What are some concrete proposals you would make to begin reversing this spending trend?

With weapon, tank, and plane parts made all over the country, what are some steps we can take to demilitarize our local economies, and overcome the military industrial complex's lobbying power?

5. It has become the norm for politicians to call for cuts in medicaid, social security, and other social services in order to deal with our looming so-called financial crisis.

What does the Tax Day Flyer tell you about those statements?

Given the information provided on the Tax Day Flyer, how would you respond to these statements?

Given the information on the Tax Day Flyer, what sort of jobs and job creation does it seem that our country thinks is worth supporting? What isn't valued the way it should be?

6. The War on Terror has been a rallying cry for proponents of military interventions and increased military spending. Yet, the How Terrorist Groups End study says something very different.

Does this study surprise you? Why?

Why do you think that this study hasn't influenced US policy?

The How Terrorist Groups End study is very informative and helpful for arguing against war and military spending. If you were to create a study, what would you investigate and why?

You can come up with your own conversation starters about military spending below:

Facilitation Ideas

As you will notice, some of the above questions are suited for people who are just learning about military spending, and others are designed for people who have a more extensive knowledge about the topic. The questions can be used in a variety of ways, and below are some activities into which the questions can be integrated:

As a way to further engage people you hand the Tax Day Flyer

A debate about spending cuts: Social Services vs. Military Spending. (See also the War Resisters League Role Play on

Tax Spending: Having a Conversation about Military Spending activity.)

A fishbowl activity

A research project on military spending and domestic weapons manufacturing

A list of talking points/a cheat sheet on how to advocate for a reduction in military spending

A whole group or small group discussion on any of the above questions

A school poll on budget cuts and military spending

A “rhetoric vs reality” study on politicians and budget cuts

And so many more...

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